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ABSTRACT

Amherst Middle School (Sherwood, Washington) has been undergoing a change process initiated by a small group of teachers who began an investigation into excellence in middle school education. An outcome has been that Amherst became a Puget Sound Professional Development School (PSPDS) while implementing a state-sponsored School for the Twenty-first Century grant. PSPDSs are part of a collaborative institution, the Puget Sound Professional Development Center (PSPDC). While the Twenty-first Century grant focused on concrete, measurable goals that were directly related to student achievement, the professional development school project had less clearly defined objectives. Although there was a strong effort to involve Amherst faculty in designing the grant proposal, the meaning and responsibilities of being a professional development school (PDS) were not fully outlined to school faculty. This failure to obtain widespread faculty involvement in committing to and planning for becoming a PDS has created certain difficulties in securing widespread faculty participation in the professional development opportunities made available through the PSPDC. This report describes some aspects of the development of Amherst Middle School as a professional development school; discusses some of the misconceptions, tensions, resistance, and resentments related to the PDS project among Amherst staff and among other district schools; traces the development of related restructuring activities at Amherst, 1984-1991; and suggests some lessons to be learned from this study of PDS implementation. (IAH)

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# AN HISTORICAL-ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF AN EMERGING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL

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## Introduction

Eight years ago a small cadre of teachers at Amherst Middle School in Sherwood Washington began an investigation of excellence in middle school level education. The process started with a few teachers who choose to participate in structural changes; teams were established and curricular revisions were attempted. Despite a union strike against the district, changing administration, faculty and in-district resentments, the group of teachers has continued its commitment to understanding what "excellence in education" means to them as individuals and as middle level educators. Writing a Twenty-first century grant proposal and application to the Professional Development Center were logical steps in an investigative process lead by the group of committed educators.

Writing the grant proposal was a long and arduous process. Leaders, respectful of the importance for faculty consensus, worked diligently to inform and confer with other faculty members less involved in the proposal authorship. Primarily, teachers agreed to make a commitment to the "outcome based education" model which emphasizes the defining of clear, educational goals for students.

During the preparation of the grant proposal, Amherst made application to participate in planning for what was to become the Puget Sound Professional Development Center (PSPDC). Primary authors of the grant proposal recognized how inclusion in the professional development school effort would complement and expand goals outlined in the Twenty-first century grant proposal. While the grant focused on concrete measurable goals, the Ford-sponsored professional development school project promised to provide philosophical dialogue, preparation of interning teachers, a support system of other like minded individuals within the Puget Sound area, and an opportunity to influence the direction of education on a state-wide and perhaps national level. For a very small group of teachers, the grant and the PSPDC were recognized as a perfect marriage; application was made and accepted. Acceptance into the PSPDC was, however, overshadowed by the news that Amherst had been awarded funding for their Twenty-first century grant. Recognizing the faculty's level of exhaustion and ability to assimilate professional changes, the principal and her closest teacher colleagues decided not to fully outline the meaning and responsibilities of PSPDC involvement for the faculty. The decision to not inform the staff of the responsibilities of being a Professional Development School seemed a logical and prudent decision at the time, yet, the consequences of this decision haunt Amherst. This report describes some aspects of the development of this one middle school as a professional development school. It may provide food for thought for others who are embarking on similar development processes.

## Method and Data Source

Data gathering: As part of the center's effort to examine progress in collaboration and plan future actions, ethnographic studies were initiated in each professional development school. For this study, the first author worked as a participant observer in Amherst Middle School during the 1990-91 school year; she attended faculty and site committee meetings; provided staff development in curriculum innovation; worked closely with small groups of teachers involved in curriculum revision; and attended PSPDC site committee meetings held at the middle school. Data was collected through informal as well as formal interviews with faculty members who have varying degrees of involvement with the professional development restructuring process. A survey regarding PSPDC involvement was also administered to the staff and analyzed.

Data Source: In-depth interviews with the principal, the Teacher Leader Coordinator and the Teaching Associate (a member of the teacher preparation program teaching team) were taped and later transcribed. Interviews were also conducted with school faculty members with varying degrees of PSPDC involvement, and with student interns. Historical documents produced from 1982 through the 1991 school year were studied, including: school profiles, grant proposals, staff development manuals, newspaper articles, student handbooks, and formal as well as informal records and publications of the professional development school's "site committee."

Data Analysis. Using comparative analysis interview notes were reviewed and analyzed for information which illuminated the participants' understanding and feelings towards the professional development restructuring process within their school. Themes emerged as interviews were analyzed; when such themes were cross referenced with historical data, patterns and generalizations regarding the professional development change process emerged.

## The Story of Amherst Professional Development School

A few blocks west of the busy north/south interstate in the Puget Sound metropolitan area of western Washington, Amherst Middle school lies within the shelter of carefully planted trees and shrubs. Eight separate California-style buildings comprise the school campus. Students and teachers use outdoor, sheltered walkways, "breeze-ways" to pass from building to building, classroom to classroom. Students refer to the separate buildings by the letter and grade level assigned to the "outside locker bays." The battered, outdoor lockers have snatches of graffiti on them; some are locked, others hang open slightly. . . too bent to close. Teachers refer to the buildings as "quads," "wings," or by a remaining hanging number from the original numerical system which identified classrooms. Two buildings are commonly referred to by subjects taught in them: "the home economics building" and the "music building", despite the fact that other subjects are also taught within these buildings. Only "The Commons" has a mutually agreed upon name; it is the building closest to

the parking lots, and includes the faculty lounge, the boiler room, the custodian's office, and The Commons: a large lunch room. One end of the lunch room has tiered seating, and is used occasionally for grade level meetings or small plays.

The classrooms reflect the 70's love of "earth tones." Avocado green indoor/outdoor carpeting, orange counters, puce chalkboards and red brick walls are the primary decor. Each room has one aluminum paned window; several have leaky roofs. All rooms are desperately short on storage; teachers have materials stacked and stuffed in every possible space. Still papers and teaching resources ooze out of stacks into the walking space surrounding teachers desk areas. Classrooms with moveable walls to encourage team teaching are even more limited in space. The walls cannot be used for shelving and are difficult to decorate with bulletin boards.

The building which houses the Administration offices, the counselors, the school nurse, and the library is referred to as "the office" or "the library" depending on which end of the building you enter. As visitors approach the office they are reminded by the large sign in the entry way to stop and pick up a visitor's badge. The Principal, Dr. Nell Pix, explained, "We had to come up with a system. We realized that people can easily walk onto campus and walk around with no one questioning them. We had one guy walk around for a whole morning before we realized he was stealing things."

The inappropriate architecture and worn facilities are misleading; Amherst Middle School is not an impersonal suburban school. There is a warmth and heightened busy-ness to this place which makes an observer forget the tired surroundings. As early as 6:00 a.m. teachers begin arriving. By 7:00 the main office is abuzz with activity. Conversation in the faculty lounges is friendly. Students, who begin arriving as early as 7:15, seem comfortable and well acquainted with their teachers. Even students who come to Mr. Frank, the vice principal for discipline, appear confident that their side of the story will be listened to and that they will be dealt with fairly. Although most students who attend Amherst are Caucasian, children of other backgrounds mix in comfortably, as do children with physical and learning handicaps. There are no "pull-out" programs at Amherst; special education students are mainstreamed into all teams. The faculty goal is to treat children equally. Everyone must have an opportunity to succeed. Yet, to placate parents of "gifted children," highly capable students have been grouped into one team; to "ease scheduling difficulties" students are grouped by math ability.

**The Leaders of Amherst**

Upon entrance to the main office there is a huge slogan on the front wall, "Amherst Middle School, Where Kid's Count!" Behind the long, orange, counter running the length of the front office, amidst a buzz of student helpers and secretaries, Dr. Pix stands casually with coffee cup in hand, visiting with students and teachers. She knows many of the 650 students by name and freely enters into conversation with them.

Quick to smile, Nell is easy to approach. She considers herself to be a "needs satisfying," leader, saying yes as often as she can, "yes-if" in more complicated issues and being consistent with her"no's" when no must be the answer. "If this is a needs fulfilling place for adults, it becomes a needs fulfilling place for kids," and indeed Nell works long hard hours to make Amherst Middle School a "needs fulfilling place" for everyone at her school. Rarely seen without her calendar, a bulging eight by five three-ring notebook stuffed full of reminders and appointments, Nell attends hundreds of meetings during the year: building meetings, Professional Development Center meetings, principal meetings, district meetings, parent meetings. She commonly arrives late to one meeting and leaves early for yet another. Nearly every week she gives a tour of Amherst Middle School and conferences with a visiting team of educators who are interested in the restructuring that has been going on at Amherst. Dr. Nell Pix is a very busy woman. Yet when questioned about her level of busy-ness and related stress she laughed and said, "Yeah, but I love this . . . ," pausing, reflecting on the vision, she added with seriousness, "I do . . . really." Dr. Pix is doing what she loves to do: creating, perpetuating and directing a learning community and influencing schools of tomorrow. Influencing the direction of education in America is "needs satisfying" for this remarkably dedicated principal.

Amherst Middle School has been undergoing a change process over the past nine years. Years of dialogue and research, have resulted in Amherst becoming a Puget Sound Professional Development School (PSPDS) while implementing a state sponsored School for the Twenty-First Century grant. Today Dr. Pix, leads the school with the assistance of a dynamic, dedicated staff. Scattered among the faculty are teachers who have taken on additional responsibilities: assisting in the internship of preservice teachers, organizing special events: fireside chats, colloquia, and cross-site exchanges; leading group discussions on current research; guiding curriculum committees; and organizing and attending meetings regarding additional funding. Leading these teachers are two individuals who have been at the forefront of Amherst's change process: Beth Harvey and Maggie Smith.

"Nell is the influencer, I'm the fish or cut bait person," explains Beth Harvey. A vivacious woman with a quick sense of humor, Beth has been a leader at Amherst since 1982. That was the year that Beth and her friend and colleague, Maggie Smith, requested permission to attend the regional National Middle School Association conference. Their attendance at the conference was the catalyst for the change process at Amherst, as Beth reflects, "I mean it was like seeing the light. I became an overnight convert, we came back and we said to the principal, we've got some plans and we want to team. We started teaming. You have to put yourself on the line." Since the 1982 NMSA conference, Beth and Maggie have continued their personal and professional interest in middle school education. They have been primary authors on every major document regarding restructuring at Amherst for the past nine years.

Beth currently works within the school as the Teacher Leader Coordinator for the PSPDC. As the TLC, "It's my job to coordinate anything no one else wants to do . . . , I'm the all around general go-fer. I'm the reminder person, the arranger of meetings, snack finder, nagger, info-dispenser, coordinator, facilitator, message relayer, agenda writer and the beggar, pleader and on occasion the groveler," says Beth. She oversees the PSPDC budgets, which can be as many as three different sources of money; she "lures people to do things" and generally oversees the influences of the Professional Development Center. She assists and supports other staff members who, often as a result of her "luring," have joined in the efforts to transform Amherst into a professional development school. Never idle at meetings, Beth constantly organizes information, corrects papers, or embroiders. Considering the number of meetings Beth attends, it comes as no surprise that people often tease her about the prodigious quantity of embroidered pieces she must have completed.

Maggie serves as an adjunct faculty member to the University of Washington as part of a university/school collaboration effort. As the Teaching Associate, she works with a team of University professors to create a curriculum for the PSPDC preservice program. She attends the twice-weekly preservice core seminar, (the heart of the pilot teacher preparation program for middle level educators), and contributes to the teaching and mentoring responsibilities of the teaching team.

**Looking Back**

During the 1983-84 school year Maggie and Beth along with a few other members of CPMS's faculty, began experimenting with team teaching and exploring the characteristics of middle schools. The 1984-85 school year brought a new challenge. Madrona Junior High and Amherst Middle School were merged to create one larger school at the Amherst facility. Student enrollment jumped from 600 to 900 students and the two very different faculties were "thrown" together. "It was the year of the colliding cultures," explained Harvey. It was also the year the Mitchell's School district mandated that its schools would move toward a school based decision making model. The change required the new faculty to work together and discuss their different perspectives. "During the 1984-85 school year, Amherst received training in the district's school-based management program, developed from the Kettering Foundation's I/D/E/A School Improvement Process Model (SIP). The membership of the school team consisted of teachers, administrators, parents and students. The emphasis of the first year was two-fold: one, to acquire the group process skills that would allow the team to become an effectively functioning organization and, second, to form a vision or master goal for the school. The goal that was developed by consensus was to raise academic achievement by developing each student's potential. The faculty worked in several task group to organize the implementation of the school

vision. By the end of Year I, the staff had set in place grading standards, a homework policy and a study skills format that included a notebook for each student."[1]

The principal of Amherst at that time, Penelope Yard, asked Beth Harvey to coordinate the transition process. "This was my first taste of empowerment," recalls Harvey, "It was a kind of an opening which lead to a bizarre change. My day became filled with much more school wide and district wide information. I started planning presentations, talking with others, teaching the staff, talking with my team about organizing units."

During the 1985-86 school year the faculty tried to implement their vision and outcome goals. "The Kettering model got us vision but the model was too diversified for implementation," recalls Harvey. Seeing the need for more specific goals, the SIP team made up of "thirteen second year members and fourteen new members [including] twelve parents, six faculty members, six students, two administrators and one teacher's aide . . . "[2] decided to make application to the Superintendent of Public instruction for a grant. The grant proposal for $9964.00 outlines two types of objectives: "Product objectives" and "Process objectives." The product objectives focus on four areas: First, "the middle school curriculum will better provide for the development of higher level thinking skills and study skills in all subject areas. These curriculum changes will be measured against the opinions of a panel of experts in these areas. Face validity analysis will show that the curriculum is responsive to the needs of early adolescents and provides smooth transition between the elementary and high school levels." Secondly, "The current advisory program will be improved so that each advisory class assures students regular, compassionate, and supportive counsel from a concerned adult about academic progress, adjustment to school, and personal adjustment." Thirdly, "The school's population will shift upward by 1% across quartiles on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests of Language and Math" and Lastly "Satisfaction with the school program in general will increase for both parents and students as involvement in decision-making increases and plans are implemented for school improvement,"[3] The process objectives of the 1986 proposal state upon receipt of these grant monies teachers will "receive training and actively participate in school improvement planning" and "parents, community and students will actively participate in school improvement planning."[4]

Amherst was awarded the grant for the 1986-87 school year. This additional money provided the staff the opportunity to look at the dynamics of their own school as they created a "profile of student achievement, behavior and attitude data. It also enabled them to participate in additional staff

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[1]Schools for the Twenty-first Century: grant proposal Amherst Middle School, Sherwood WA
1988, page 20.
[2]Application for School Based Management Grant, Amherst Middle School, 1986, page 3.
[3]Ibid, page 4.
[4]Ibid.

student achievement, behavior and attitude data. It also enabled them to participate in additional staff development which lead them to the exploration of outcome-based learning. "[T]he state grant allowed us to work with the Onward to Excellence (OTE) program from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Through the OTE process, we developed a profile of the school from which the staff came to consensus on the major goal which is to increase the percentage of students who are to achieve at the A, B, C, level. The OTE goal became a natural extension or refinement of the 1984-85 school-based management goal. As the staff studied the available research and formed a plan of effective school practices which would support the academic goal, there was a growing awareness that the outcome-based education/mastery learning was a critical element to the success of our goal. Several staff members visited the Johnson City program, attended conferences and piloted units of study using the mastery learning model."[6] The 1986-87 was remembered as a year of vibrant inquiry and reflection for the staff at Amherst.

The following school year began with a long teacher strike against the district. It set the mood for the remainder of the year; staff members were embittered and tired. Harvey says, "1987 was a thinking year. There was a lot of talk, tension, emotion; a lot of talk and compromise." Despite the depressed mood of the staff they were still able to produce a parent handbook, set up school notebook calendars, assignment sheets, peer tutoring classes and write a study skills curriculum. Conversation continued.

The 1988-89 school brought a resurgence of enthusiasm and energy for transforming Amherst. "In February,1988, two thirds of the faculty joined with the district level curriculum representatives and parents to work on four task groups that would develop more specific objectives and activities for restructuring."[7] Out of this list of objectives came the application for the Twenty-First century grant. The grant supports a six year plan for restructuring Amherst into a school which ". . . through its organization of resources and programs-- and the staff--through its attitudes, beliefs and practices--assumes responsibility for the success of each student."[8]

As in the 1985-86 SPI grant proposal, the faculty divided their objectives into "product" and "process objectives. "The "product objectives" refer to "expected student outcomes," and include four objectives:

Objective 1: All students will master at a high level, a challenging curriculum as evidenced by: 95% of students mastering (at 80%) the specific course objectives, earning "B's" and "A's"; 80% of students scoring in upper stanines on standardized test measures; 100% of students

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[6]Schools for the Twenty-first Century: grant proposal Amherst Middle School, Sherwood WA 1989, page 21.
[7]Schools for the Twenty-first Century: grant proposal Amherst Middle School, Sherwood WA 1989, page 24.
[8]Ibid, page 11.

mastering ten basic study skills; 95% of students scoring at grade level or above on math and reading standardized measures.

Objective 2: All students will demonstrate responsible self-directed learning.

Objective 3: All student will demonstrate responsible behavior and caring for others.

Objective 4: All students will have high esteem as measured by a standardized self-concept test.

The "Process objectives" are as follows:

Objective 5: Develop and implement a mastery learning, outcome-based curriculum and instructional delivery system.

Objective 6: Empower teachers through collaboration with others to make important decisions such as those regarding learning time and curriculum delivery.

Objective 7: Implement continuous school improvement through a participatory, building-based model that encourages and rewards teacher leadership and professional growth.[9]

**Amherst Becomes a Professional Development School**

1988 was also the year Ann Lieberman, director of the Puget Sound Educational Consortium, and Nathalie Gehrke, a professor from the University of Washington, began their Ford Foundation-supported work to create a professional development center in the Puget Sound area. Not knowing whether their grant for the Twenty-first century would be accepted or not, Dr. Pix and Maggie Smith decided to take advantage of an invitation to apply to be a part of the newly forming Professional Development Center. They asked that their school be considered for one of the four middle school sites. As aware and involved as the faculty was in the Twenty-first century grant proposal, they were unaware of the PSPDC application. Dr. Pix explained, "We put in the application not knowing if we had the grant, the first decision to go with [the PDC] was really Maggie's, Beth's and mine . Consensus was not gotten. We made the decision. We saw the PSPDC as helping us in all our missions. We were in the position for influencing education, this PSPDC would help us influence training and the sharing of knowledge."

The purpose of the professional development center to which Amherst belongs is three fold: to offer continuing professional development for teachers and other educators; to provide initial teacher preparation through a model middle school certification program; to develop university/school collaborative inquiry into practices and programs. The center is focused not just on the development of four exemplary schools, but on the creation of a new entity through which innovative approaches to inquiry, professional development, and the school restructuring can be tried and shared throughout the area and beyond. In an effort not to overwhelm the faculty with the complexity, Dr. Pix introduced the PSPDC simply as an invitation to Amherst to collaborate with the University in an innovative student

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[9]Ibid, page 24-25.

teacher program. "People who were interested in having student teachers were those who initially became involved," Nell explains, "I try to match up the wants and needs of individuals with the wants and needs of the school." The next step was to "pull in people who were interested in professional growth opportunities . . . and unfortunately some of our initial PSPDC events weren't that successful, like the spring colloquium [spring 1989]. It didn't meet people's needs. It was exciting for some, but not grabbing many." Because the staff, so used to collaborative school decisions, had not been actively involved in the decision to apply to be a Professional Development School (PDS), the leaders were left with the issue of trying to get people to "buy in," as Nell says, to PSPDC involvement.

There are a few teachers who, despite their expertise and professional experience, choose not to become involved in the PSPDC. Some teachers complain they have "been left behind". As one teacher said "if you didn't get in on the ground level, you missed your chance to be involved." Physical education teachers are resentful the University of Washington does not have student teachers in the PE area. They see this as a primary deterrent to their PSPDC involvement. PSPDC members have been accused of being a clique. When a teacher leader was asked to respond to this accusation she replied, "We've invited people to be a part of the PSPDC ad nauseam ...It's a clique from the outside looking in. It's a clique to those who choose not to be a part of the PSPDC," then citing Glasser's control theory she continued, "You have choices. You can choose to be in favor of the PSPDC, or you can choose to bad mouth the PSPDC."

"Luring" other members of the faculty to become involved in PSPDC activities is a complicated and fragile business. Teachers who are ripe for PSPDC involvement must be convinced they will reap benefits which outweigh their reasons for remaining uninvolved. Harvey has devised a strategy for luring teachers into PSPDC involvement (see appendix.) One teacher leader laughed, "How did I get involved in the PSPDC? I made a mistake at the copy machine. Beth asked me if I would do something for her. I said 'yes,' the next thing I knew I was in charge of fireside chats!" As a result of his "mistake" this teacher organized three fireside chats on technology, attended several site committee meetings and curriculum workshops, in addition to regular teaching responsibilities. Harvey recognizes the first step in getting others involved in the PSPDC is to match their personal or professional interests with the goals of the PSPDC. She believes that once the teacher sees the benefit of being involved in the PSPDC, she or he will become more open to other professional development opportunities.

Yet it takes time to organize professional development opportunities like fireside chats and colloquiums, and even though this responsibility may only require a few phone calls and the copying of flyers, teachers are resistant to the idea of taking on additional responsibilities. A few teachers criticize PSPDC leaders as having "more time" than themselves, pointing to their "part time contracts" and "more flexible schedules" as reasons why "they" can "do PSPDC stuff." It is true Beth Harvey, a

part time employee, holds eight tenths of a position. Maggie Smith, on a full time contract, spends eight tenths of her day as the school librarian; which some colleagues complain "is not as difficult as being a classroom teacher." While it is true Maggie has less class preparation than her middle school colleagues; her critics overlook the preparation she must do for the teaching of the preservice seminar.

Upon further investigation, the argument that being a part time employee frees you to become involved in professional development weakens. There are other part time faculty members who choose not to be actively involved in PSPDC activities even when there is a "match " of interests. These teachers cite family responsibilities combined with the commitment to outcome based education which requires continued reassessment of students, as far too demanding to allow for any additional professional responsibilities. As one teacher put it, "Frankly, I don't know how other people do it. Outcome based education requires me to have more materials, more conceptual time; it's more time consuming. I'm working as many hours as I can and to be involved in the PSPDC in a meaningful way requires a large time commitment. Yes. It's time--there's nowhere else for the time to come from." For novice teachers, the every day tasks of balancing the classroom work load and the responsibilities of home may be all encompassing. As teachers resolve these struggles and things quiet at home, their needs may change. Active PSPDC members, those who attend PSPDC site meetings, lead discussions, attend workshops, engage in action research and seek out relationships with PSPDC members at different sites recognize the fragile balance between the contribution of their time and the professional benefits. These teacher are more experienced professionals, who have established strategies for coping with the demands of classroom teaching, have older children (if any at all), and most importantly, have needs which match PSPDC goals: they feel a need for professional development. At this point in their career it is a necessary and rewarding part of being an educator.

The director of the PSPDC from the University of Washington, continues to point out that these new activities teachers are engaging in should not be construed as "additional responsibilities," but rather as "new teacher roles" in a professional development school. Time must be allocated differently to assure this. In an effort to support the point, she and other planning committee members have sought to discover a variety of ways to reallocate teacher time to such new roles. Further she and her graduate assistant wrote a successful grant proposal to the Carnegie foundation which allowed each school within the PSPDC to have $9,000.00 strictly for reallocation of teacher time toward restructuring efforts.

Despite repeated discussions and meetings regarding the clear restrictions upon the nine thousand dollars: it was to be used only for reallocation of teacher time, confusion and misunderstandings shrouded the spending. Amherst teachers believe their first teacher responsibility is to their students and consequently are more willing to add on time rather than reallocate it. Some teachers are resentful of missing even one period with "their kids " and are openly critical of those who are out of the classroom frequently on PSPDC business. One teacher remarked, "I'm ticked off about

how many days those teachers are gone out of the building." PSPDC teacher leaders struggle with this issue personally and privately; the higher the level of involvement a teacher has in the PSPDC, the more frequently she/he is away from his/her classroom.

Eventually the Amherst "site committee" chose to use part of the $9,000.00 to buy substitute time in order for 15 teachers to attend an all day staff development workshop on integrative curriculum design. Many of the fifteen people who attended the all-day workshop were faculty members who had had some level of PSPDC involvement in the past. Several had been cooperating teachers; others had been involved in past professional development activities; a few had been lured in to attendance due to their own interest in curriculum design. Those who attended the workshop agreed to return to their teaching teams and report out on the workshop, in an effort to invite others to join in designing integrative units. Remaining monies were divided into "mini-grants" for which teams could make application. The 1990-91 additional "Turning Points" money which came as a result of a Carnegie grant awarded to the Professional Development Center "was kind of a breakthrough for us in increasing involvement. It provided a match for [two teacher leaders] who were able to see how the PSPDC could assist them in their personal and professional goals," explains Dr. Pix.

Nell Pix and teachers with a high level of PSPDC involvement understand that the goals of the Twenty-first Century grant are congruent with the goals as a professional development school. When asked to organize index cards with the names of faculty members into those who are involved in the PSPDC and those who are not, Maggie handed the stack back to the researcher remarking, "This is a trick question, right? We're all members of the PSPDC." This understanding of how the two are one is not shared by the majority of the staff. As the transformation of Amherst continues, the need to build faculty awareness of that oneness escalates in importance. There is a dangerous level of anxiety and stress among less involved PSPDC members. They see a wide variety of "things going on" which seem unrelated and fragmented. "Our staff is maxed out, even though the year [1990-91] is not as busy as the first year we had the grant, people are overwhelmed, There's so much going on," explained a teacher leader. A physical education teacher complained, "There's so many things going on around here you lose track of deadlines ...there's so many things happening I feel overwhelmed." Other teachers display frustration in not knowing what the PSPDC is; yet these same teachers are often surprised to find an event centered around an interest of theirs. They are completely unaware of the constant efforts of PSPDC members to bridge and relate all school activities under the umbrella of the professional development school.

Despite the complexity of coaxing teachers to take on professional development responsibilities, faculty involvement in the PSPDC has increased significantly. During the 1990-91 school year, twenty-five out of 39 staff members (teaching staff, administration and counselors) attended one or more PSPDC event. Most teachers averaged attendance at six PSPDC events during the 90-91 school year. Despite high faculty involvement, awareness of what a professional

development school is, remains limited to a few. Regardless of the number of professional development activities a teacher has participated in, she or he is a member of the Professional Development Center. That so few see this, presents a future challenge for the school's leaders.

The stresses and frustrations of surviving a change process can be many. As holders of the vision, Beth, Nell and Maggie find themselves pulled in many directions. As a professional development school they are held accountable to professional development center goals, to their district, which in 1989 contributed ten thousand dollars to the change process and in 1990 contributed a little over eight thousand, and to the state of Washington for their School for the Twenty-first Century grant. Unfortunately, all the attention and monies Amherst has received has resulted in district resentments. Teachers and principals at other schools claim Amherst has gotten an undue share of resources and, as one teacher put it, "they say any school that has gotten as much money as Amherst could do the same things." The changes Amherst has undergone are far more complicated than the simple increase in funds, and additional monies result in additional responsibilities. Being accountable to several different sources, which often require different types of reporting, only contributes to the challenges of restructuring. Leaders, like anyone else, need support and trusted sounding boards. Feeling isolated from her district colleagues, Nell, like Beth and Maggie, looks to other professional development center professionals for support. While the PSPDC requires a great deal of time and effort, it is one of the few places visionaries can go for support. At planning committee meetings, which have been held approximately four times a year, professionals from all five sites and from supporting professional organizations (Washington Education Association, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Middle Level Educators) meet to discuss issues regarding the definition, development and difficulties of professional development schools and the larger collaborative community of the PSPDC. Professionals meet for whole group discussions then break into job alike or mixed groups to engage in reflection and planning; brainstorming, problem solving and reflection are the activities of the planning committee.

During the 1989-90 school year Amherst Middle school participated in several professional development center activities. They started two study groups: one on Glasser's control theory, the other on technology They organized and offered a district-wide colloquium on self-directed learners. A few faculty members attended other PSPDC-sponsored colloquiums on self esteem, service learning, and "futures," Staff members had the opportunity to participate in staff development in the areas of peer coaching, site based decision making and action research, all supported by Center funds. One cross site exchange of staff members occurred between Amherst and another PDS, Milton Middle School in Oakgrove, Washington. In addition to the professional growth activities, the faculty contributed to the preparation of two student teachers. The site committee's end-of-the-year reflections acknowledged the problem of low faculty attendance at PSPDC events held off Amherst campus, and that there was low participation in PSPDC events by other Mitchell's middle schools. It was their goal

to attend to these problems and to continue the Glasser study group during the upcoming school year. In addition, they would pursue staff development opportunities in the following areas: peer coaching, action research, effective middle school practices, self-directed learners, cooperative group learning, and integrated curriculum design. The overall goal was to increase faculty involvement in the PSPDC activities.

The 1990-91 school year was filled with PSPDC activities. Both study groups continued. The technology study group incorporated fireside chats into their studies. Fireside chats were held off campus in a cozy environment; teachers engage in conversation about a particular topic facilitated by an expert, usually a university professor. The teacher leader from Amherst became so enthusiastic about the idea of fireside chats that he placed a TV into an empty hearth and played a videotape he had recorded of a fire burning to add to the ambiance of the "chat." Continuing staff development was offered in the areas of: peer coaching, cooperative learning, action research, integrated curriculum, and management styles. Twelve out of the school's thirty nine teachers attended a lecture by Jaime Escalante regarding changes in education or pursued professional development by attending conferences elsewhere. In addition, members of the PSPDC attended numerous meetings on the University campus in efforts to collaborate with other professional development schools. PSPDC involvement among staff members increased significantly. Those who had been involved the previous years took on more significant leadership role, organizing events and attending PSPDC meetings, while newer members participated in the organized events.

In the spring of 1991 the site committee sent out a PSPDC survey in which they asked all members of the faculty to record all the PSPDC events in which they had participated and to make recommendations for the 1991-92 school year. This survey (see appendix) indicated that the average number of events a faculty member attended during the 90-91 school year was six events; in addition to this, there was increased interest in continuing and expanding professional development opportunities. The faculty chose twelve different areas they would like to study the upcoming year: technology demonstrations and product centered curriculum design, integrated curriculum, self-directed learning activities, Glasser's quality schools study group, Glasser's control theory and reality therapy study group, cooperative learning, stress education classes, learning styles and brain research workshops, service learning, adapted curriculum,and action research.

Once again the site committee noted the low level of participation of other Penelope Yard district middle schools in PSPDC events. They will continue to invite other schools to send liaisons to their site meetings and invite faculties to attend PSPDC events. They also plan to offer professional development opportunities selected by staff and continue to increase faculty participation in PSPDC events.

In addition to all the other PSPDC activities on-going at Amherst, during the '89-'90 and '90-'91 school years, Amherst claimed a "professor in residence." An active PSPDC member, the

professor from the University of Washington spent a portion of one day each week in the school, for two years. He also attended site committee meetings, faculty meetings, fireside chats and other PSPDC events. A specialist in questioning strategies, the professor is a well known curriculum expert. But late in the second year when faculty members were asked who he was, few knew his name and even fewer had engaged in conversation with him. A valuable resource to the Amherst faculty, the professor's talents barely have been tapped. According to the spring PSPDC survey, only nine faculty members reported having attended fireside chats or having initiated a project with the professor. When asked about his role in the professional development school, the professor replied, "Well we've never done this before, we don't know what a professor in residence's role is. I'm just waiting to see what evolves." Is it the lack of a role model which deters teacher collaboration with the professor or is it something else?

The most powerful belief system at work at Amherst Middle School is that "outcomes" must be set for students, then curriculum must be aligned to help students reach those outcomes: outcomes are reached through "mastery learning." Before the Twenty-first Century grant, before the Professional Development Center. . . there was mastery learning and outcome-based education. The faculty has set general outcome goals for their students, "Product objectives" for students, projecting that certain percentages of children will "master a challenging curriculum,"[10] yet, what a challenging curriculum is remains to be defined. The faculty's recent interest in and study of integrated curriculum design promises to elicit fundamental questions regarding which knowledge is most worth teaching. Certainly teachers have grappled with issues as to what makes a specific course objective, but the issue of quality objectives is still up for discussion. Integrative curriculum is curriculum with depth; it requires children to analyze ideas and discuss them, to create theories and test them, to design their own learning experiences. Encouraging teacher and student to collaborate on creating curriculum, integrative curriculum veers from the information standardized tests evaluate and invites students and teachers to enter into the mystery of knowing and not knowing. This philosophy is in considerable conflict with outcome-based education's motto, "mastery not mystery learning." Teachers who participate in professional development activities often remark about the need to deal with ambiguity of not knowing; the more they learn the more they realize they know very little. This is the nature of learning, yet to their students they promise the reaching of an "outcome" in a learning experience. Perhaps the best learning experiences leave the learner with a sense of "not knowing" and the desire to continue the search for understanding.

Faculty members of Amherst Middle School must address this issue of conflicting perspectives of learning. What sort of outcomes do learners, whether an adult or a child, need in the process of learning? Is it important for children to master the information tested on standardized tests, or is there

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[10]Ibid, page 24.

more relevant knowledge to teach? A dialogue must begin addressing these questions and others sure to emerge. The professor in residence and other curriculum specialists available through the Professional Development Center can and perhaps will provide the necessary support to teachers as they begin making sense of these difficult curricular questions.

Strong and dynamic leaders have lead Amherst Middle School through a change process which preceded the PSPDC and would continue without it. Certainly the momentum would drop significantly, and education mavericks would be severed from a powerful support group, but change would continue. The core of teachers committed to professional development has grown and is increasingly powerful. More teachers are capable of dealing with the frustrations and ambiguities of institutional transformation; more teachers are willing to take risks. As Professional Development Center grant monies run low at the conclusion of the 1991 year, teachers will be put to the test. Will the commitment to professional development continue when the money is gone? Will teachers push for district, or union contractual changes which allow them to redefine their roles as teachers? Is there an outcome to a process?

## SUMMARY & COMMENTS

Despite the concerted efforts of teacher leaders to broaden awareness of the PSPDC, confusion, and at times, resentment toward the PSPDC, are common among faculty members. Individuals who do not understand the dovetailing of the grant and the PSPDC have higher levels of anxiety; they feel "overwhelmed" and "fragmented." Amherst's PSPDC site committee notes faculty confusion and recognizes the increasing district and PSPDC demands to illustrate the benefits of being a professional development school. The gap between faculty anxiety and Center expectations must be bridged.

Dedicating "early release" or "late arrival" workshop time to increasing understanding that the Twenty-first century restructuring goals are among the goals of the Professional Development School will be time well spent. Clarifying mis-information and nurturing a more concrete understanding of the Professional Development Center will decrease anxieties and may invite others to become more actively involved. Teachers must be given opportunities to ask questions, discuss, construct models and illustrate their understanding of how the grant is related to the pre-service program, staff development and other professional opportunities going on within the building; further attention should then be given to illustrating how Amherst is related to the other four sites within the Professional Development Center.

A distinction must be made between the "additional responsibilities" anxious faculty members fear will be imposed upon them and the new roles being created for teachers by the Professional Development Center. The Center regards teaching careers as professions in progress which have different phases of development. Not all teachers are ready to take on new roles within the school: single parents may not be able to take on additional professional responsibilities while their children are young; teachers changing subject areas may be less able to take on other building responsibilities; beginning teachers need mentor teachers to guide them. There are other teacher however, who are ready and eager to take on new professional roles: organizing colloquiums, fireside chats and exchange programs, giving symposiums, teaching college level classes. The Amherst faculty must have this perspective of professional development explained to them; regardless of where teachers are in their professional development it is important to acknowledge their contributions to the field and support them as best possible. Professional development is not a competition, it is a process unique to each individual.

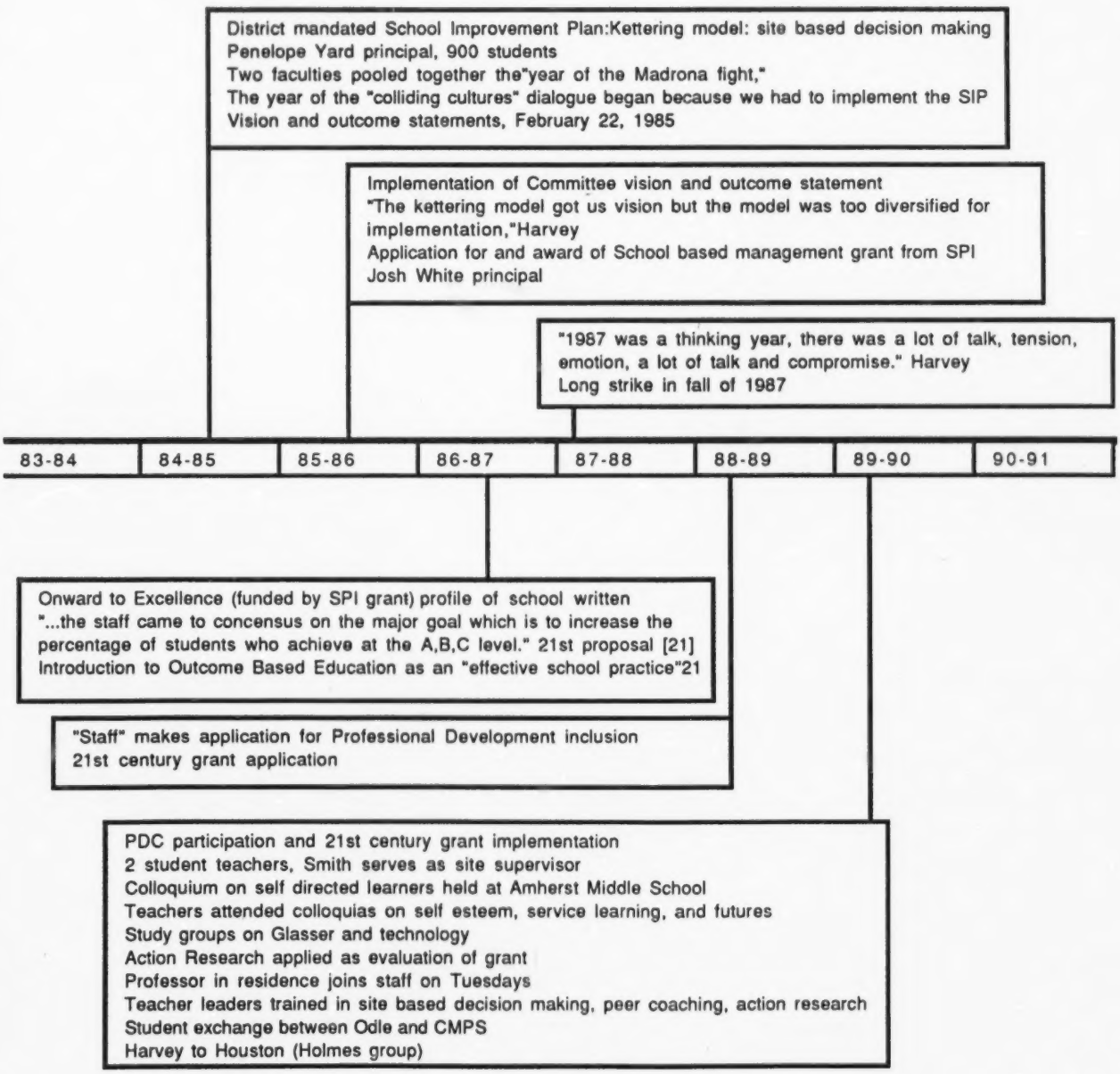
Eight years ago when two teacher leaders began their research of middle school education, curriculum was a priority area of investigation. In spite of the many structural, political and philosophical changes Amherst has undergone, few changes have been made in curriculum content and instructional practices. As a result of a PSPDC grant, "Turning Points" money provided by the

Carnegie foundation helped to fund curriculum studies; once again curriculum has became a focus of Amherst faculty. Philosophically the teachers agree that learning must be directed towards expected outcomes, but little attention has been given to what outcomes are most important for middle level children to reach. The curriculum study group formed in 1990 must continue their investigation of curricular issues and practices. This core of professionals can continue their dialogue by defining what they believe curriculum to be, then identifying academic, social and ethical outcomes they believe their students must work towards. Amherst is lucky to have a professor in residence and a graduate student liaison from the Professional Development Center who specialize in such curricular questions. It is my recommendation the professor in resident and graduate student sit in on these discussions, not as a facilitators, but as members of the PSPDC Amherst curriculum team.

It is clear that Amherst Middle School is influencing educational change within the state. Their position as a school for the Twenty-first century invites interest from legislators and other state politicians as well as other educators. Different groups of visiting teaching teams tour Amherst Middle School on a weekly basis. Teacher leaders often present at state and local conferences on a number of different topics: action research, professional development, outcome based education, new teacher roles, university and school collaborative relationships. During the writing of this ethnography the principal, Nell Pix traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with President Bush to discuss educational issues; Maggie Smith was elected to the President-elect position of the state Middle Level Education Association.

Critics of Amherst may complain the faculty has been "just lucky" in getting funding, that "they have always been in the right place at the right time." Amherst leaders wouldn't argue luck has played a role in their change process, but a dedication to creating the best possible learning environment has driven the process. If Amherst were not a recipient of the Twenty-first century grant or a Professional Development Center participant, innovation and dialogue would still fuel their fires of transformation. The true stroke of luck for Amherst happened eight years ago when a small nucleus of teachers recognized their power as educators and began working together as a team to change their school. Grant writing, research, further education, risk taking, have all been inspired by these teachers' commitment to children and to the teaching profession. The change process has been perpetuated by friendship and collegial respect for one another. Grant monies and PSPDC involvement have facilitated and accelerated a change process that for Amherst professionals was inevitable. Now it may be the nation which is lucky; we may all benefit from the knowledge and expertise of these dedicated professionals.

# AMHERST MIDDLE SCHOOL HISTORY 1983-1990


District mandated School Improvement Plan:Kettering model: site based decision making
Penelope Yard principal, 900 students
Two faculties pooled together the"year of the Madrona fight,"
The year of the "colliding cultures" dialogue began because we had to implement the SIP
Vision and outcome statements, February 22, 1985
Implementation of Committee vision and outcome statement
"The kettering model got us vision but the model was too diversified for implementation,"Harvey
Application for and award of School based management grant from SPI
Josh White principal
"1987 was a thinking year, there was a lot of talk, tension, emotion, a lot of talk and compromise." Harvey
Long strike in fall of 1987
83-84
84-85
85-86
86-87
87-88
88-89
89-90
90-91
Onward to Excellence (funded by SPI grant) profile of school written
"...the staff came to concensus on the major goal which is to increase the percentage of students who achieve at the A,B,C level." 21st proposal [21]
Introduction to Outcome Based Education as an "effective school practice"21
"Staff" makes application for Professional Development inclusion
21st century grant application
PDC participation and 21st century grant implementation
2 student teachers, Smith serves as site supervisor
Colloquium on self directed learners held at Amherst Middle School
Teachers attended colloquias on self esteem, service learning, and futures
Study groups on Glasser and technology
Action Research applied as evaluation of grant
Professor in residence joins staff on Tuesdays
Teacher leaders trained in site based decision making, peer coaching, action research
Student exchange between Odle and CMPS
Harvey to Houston (Holmes group)

# Amherst PDC Accomplishments 1990-1991

Professor in residence:

Peer coaching staff development

Glasser Study Group

3 Fireside Chats on technology

**1990 - 1991**

89-90 goals:
*increase in-district participation in PDC activities
*address issues of low attendence of off-campus PDC events (end of year report 89-90)

Attendence at Middle School colloquium at BTMS Jan 25

"Monthly" site meetings

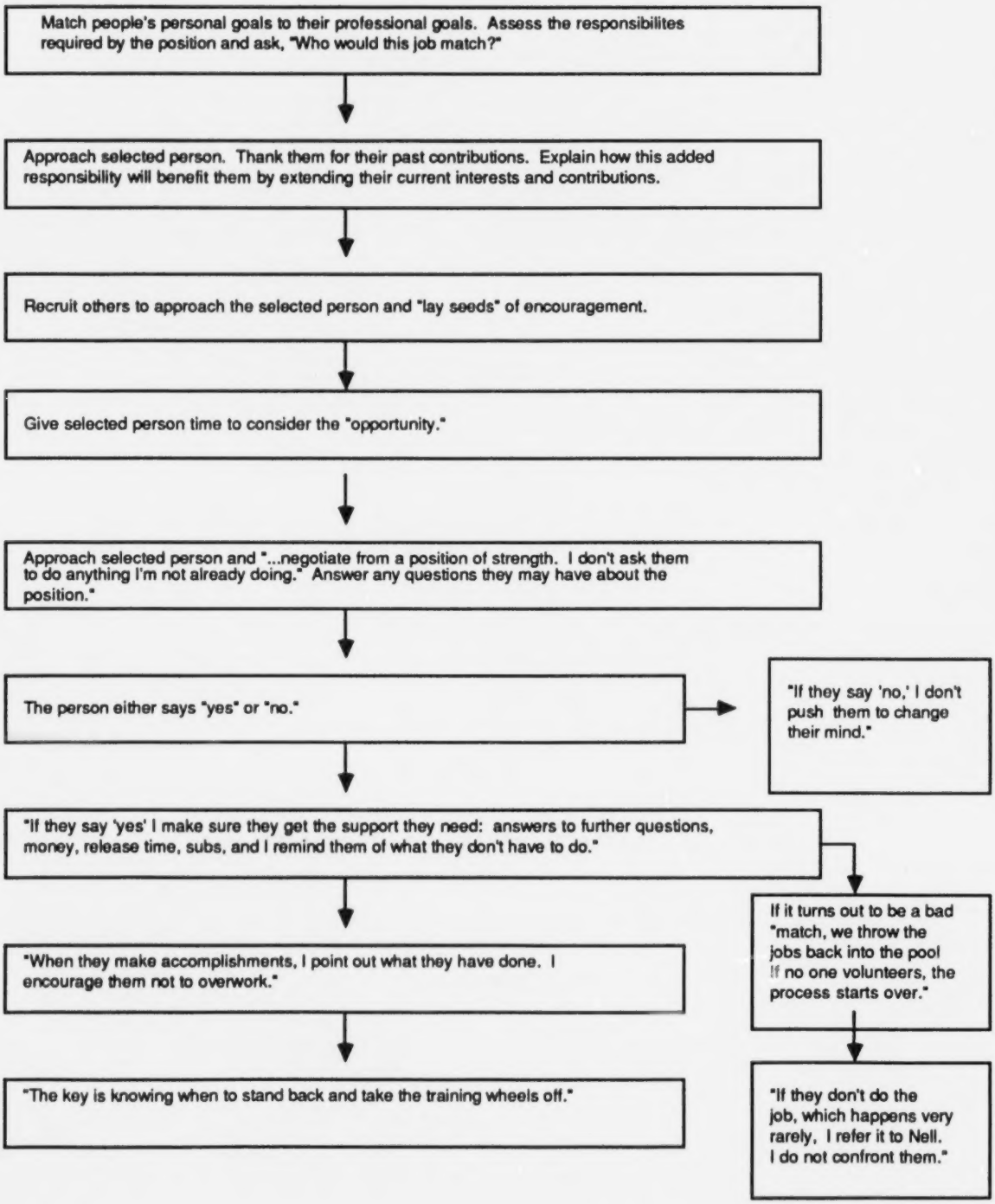
Maggie Smith serves as adjunct faculty in PDC student teacher program

Cooperative teachers

Hilda Wise serves as site supervisior

Staff development in integrated curriculum

## LURING SOMEONE TO TAKE ON ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES


Match people's personal goals to their professional goals. Assess the responsibilites required by the position and ask, "Who would this job match?"
Approach selected person. Thank them for their past contributions. Explain how this added responsibility will benefit them by extending their current interests and contributions.
Recruit others to approach the selected person and "lay seeds" of encouragement.
Give selected person time to consider the "opportunity."
Approach selected person and "...negotiate from a position of strength. I don't ask them to do anything I'm not already doing." Answer any questions they may have about the position."
The person either says "yes" or "no."
"If they say 'no,' I don't push them to change their mind."
"If they say 'yes' I make sure they get the support they need: answers to further questions, money, release time, subs, and I remind them of what they don't have to do."
If it turns out to be a bad "match, we throw the jobs back into the pool If no one volunteers, the process starts over."
"When they make accomplishments, I point out what they have done. I encourage them not to overwork."
"The key is knowing when to stand back and take the training wheels off."
"If they don't do the job, which happens very rarely, I refer it to Nell. I do not confront them."